



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
March 18-22, 2013***

Aboriginal healing centres face funding problems

[CBC News](#)

Mar 20, 2013 2:26 PM MT



Allen Benson is concerned about the future of the Stan Daniels Healing Centre (CBC)

Funding issues may make the operations of aboriginal healing lodges such as Edmonton's Stan Daniels Centre increasingly difficult, a federal prison watchdog says in a recent report.

In the report, which focuses on the over-representation of aboriginal people within the federal prison system, correctional investigator Howard Sapers says healing lodges face insecurity due to chronic underfunding — making it difficult for facilities to meet operational costs.

The Stan Daniels Healing Centre — a 70-bed minimum security facility — is one of the few programs in Canada serving as a re-integration centre for aboriginal offenders, and is the only such centre located in an urban setting.

The centre's programming focuses on repairing relationships between offenders and their communities, and helps individuals find employment and housing after their release.

It is also unique in that it is run by an aboriginal agency.

Allen Benson, CEO of Native Counselling Services of Alberta which runs the Stan Daniels Centre, is concerned that limited federal funding may jeopardize the centre's future.

Although Correctional Service Canada (CSC) says it remains committed to supporting programs like the Stan Daniels centre, Benson is worried that current funding can't keep up with the growing problem.

A growing problem

"We're deeply concerned about the funding issues," he said Monday. "With the rising population of aboriginal people, [over-representation] is going to become a bigger epidemic than it already is."

While aboriginal people make up just four per cent of Canada's population, they make up 23 per cent of federal inmates — a nearly 40 per cent increase from 2001-2002 numbers.

"We're building more prison beds — but we're not building more healing lodges," Benson said.

He believes that this is a mistake.

He thinks federal support of the aboriginal healing lodges will ultimately save Canadians money and form safer, stronger communities.

"Without those healing programs, basically we'd be releasing an offender straight from prison into the community. The community would not be as safe," said Benson.

"We need to have a recognized process for dealing with aboriginal offenders through integration."

Patrick Kotok said the reintegration program at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre helped him write a resume and prepare for job interviews. (CBC)

Patrick Kotok, 51, has spent nearly half of his life in prisons across the country and has been through the re-integration program at the Stan Daniels centre.

Kotok credits the centre's programming for helping him determine the root causes of his crime, and also helped him deal with his addiction to alcohol.

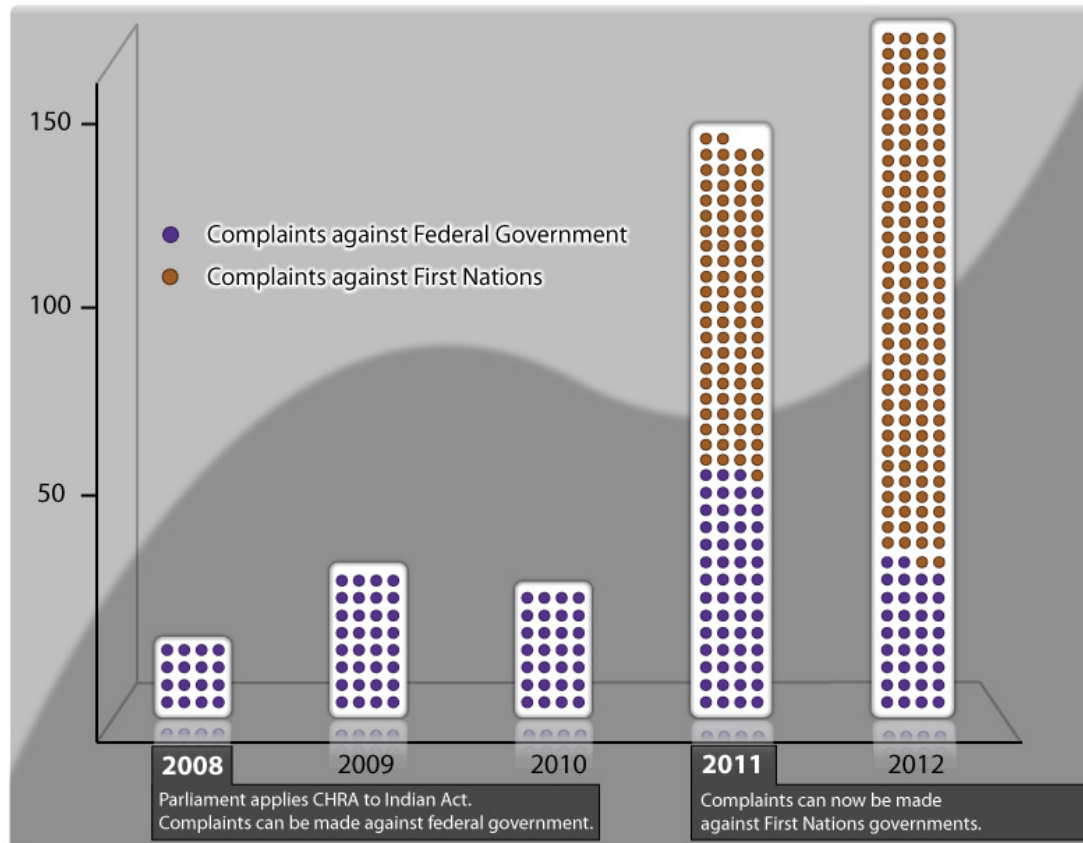
"They help you write your resume, they give you job interview skills, they help you set up with interviews to look for work... it's been a great help," said Kotok, who is now hoping to go back to school.

"In my case, [the healing centre] made a difference because it helped me open up my eyes."

With files from the Gareth Hampshire

2012 Annual Report: First Nations turn to Canadian Human Rights Act as agent of change

[Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)



Between 2008 and 2012, the Commission saw a dramatic increase in the number of complaints from Aboriginal people and First Nations groups.

Many Canadians were never aware that the 1977 Canadian Human Rights Act excluded matters under the Indian Act—a law that governs life on reserves for some 700,000 Aboriginal people living in more than 600 communities.

This exclusion was meant to be temporary, but it was not corrected until 2008, when Parliament amended the Canadian Human Rights Act to extend full human rights protections to First Nations people. Everyone else in Canada had had these protections since 1977.

Amending the Canadian Human Rights Act to include the Indian Act was one of a number of measures, including the Prime Minister's Residential schools apology, designed to address inequities and a legacy of neglect and discriminatory policies.

The change was intended to promote equality as well as improve accountability. It increases the federal government's accountability in decisions affecting First Nations.

And it puts an onus on First Nations governments to be more accountable to the people they serve.

The change was applicable to the Government of Canada on June 18, 2008. It became applicable to First Nations governments on June 18, 2011.

As the surge in new Aboriginal complaints shows [see chart above], Aboriginal people have embraced the Canadian Human Rights Act as a tool to ensure equality and improve accountability and governance in their communities.

The impact

Since the change took effect, Aboriginal people and First Nations groups have filed 390 complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (Commission).

225 complaints were against First Nations governments and involve issues such as housing on reserves and eligibility to vote in Band council elections.

165 complaints have been filed against the federal government. Many of them allege that federal funding for services delivered on reserves is inequitable and discriminatory when compared to provincial and territorial funding for the same services off reserve. These services include things such as education, policing and child welfare.

Some complaints could be precedent-setting. Some have the potential to have an impact on formulas used by the Government of Canada to fund services in First Nations communities.



A critical test

Daniel Poulin, Senior Counsel and Samar Musallam, Counsel, at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, September 25, 2012. FRANK BEAULÉ /CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

A case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in early 2013 will be a major test of the extent to which Aboriginal people living on reserves can use the Canadian Human Rights Act to bring about real, tangible change in their communities.

After years of legal back-and-forth, the Tribunal has scheduled 14 weeks of hearings. This will be the first time the case will be heard on the merits.

The issues at the heart of this case will finally be addressed. Can Aboriginal people use the Canadian Human Rights Act not just to hold their own governments accountable, but also to hold the federal government accountable, as Parliament intended?

This case stems from a complaint filed against the Government of Canada by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations.

The complainants allege that federal funding for child welfare services on reserve is inadequate, and in comparison to funding for similar services provided by provinces and territories, amounts to discrimination against First Nations children and families in violation of the Canadian Human Rights Act.



Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, September 25, 2012. FRANK BEAULÉ /CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Attorney General of Canada is expected to argue that funding for services on reserve is not within the scope of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

If the Attorney General of Canada is successful, all funding for services that the Government of Canada provides could fall outside the jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

It is the Commission's position that a finding in favour of the Attorney General's argument would undermine Canada's human rights legislation, adversely impacting all Canadians, and First Nations people in particular.

The Commission believes that limiting the jurisdiction and scope of the Canadian Human Rights Act would nullify Parliament's intent when it amended the Act in 2008.

Spence joins NAN council

[Chronicle Journal](#)

March 18, 2013 - 08:00

Karen McKinley



Jackie Fletcher of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women's Council shared some surprises at Sunday's close of a three-day conference in Thunder Bay. (Brent Linton)

Members of a First Nations women's council are calling their annual gathering groundbreaking after two surprise announcements.

The Nishanwbe Aski Nation Women's Council held its annual gathering over the weekend, closing Sunday with a

series of workshops which spokeswoman Jackie Fletcher called pivotal and full of positive surprises.

"We welcomed (Attawapiskat First Nation) Chief Theresa Spence to our council," Fletcher said in an interview.

"We had invited her to join us, because it raises the profile of the NAN Women's Council. We've had issues with men not appreciating what we do and we are trying to make changes in communities as women," said Fletcher.

"She's raised issues on a much higher level, and we want her to bring her expertise to the council and she said she would do it."

Spence was at the Sunday sessions.

The second announcement was the return of former NAN Women's Council member Abigail Wesley.

Wesley, a Cat Lake First Nation councillor, said she wants to give First Nations women a stronger presence on the public and political stage and bring NAN more into the public forum.

Fletcher said the theme of this year's gathering was Exploring our Past, Present and Future: Supporting the Women of the Nation.

"This gathering has always been a great way for women to build capacity in many areas like social and economic issues," she said. "It also helps empower women to stand up and run for positions that will make a difference in their communities, like chiefs and councillors."

Fletcher said that in the 49 communities that NAN represents, most chiefs and councillors are male, but women make up 51 per cent of the population. The women's council is aiming for more balance at band council tables. The weekend looked at past events, starting from contact with Europeans, to how family units were broken and efforts to rectify that, to a legacy for future generations. Sessions included a look at historical moments from first contact to residential schools. Workshops on mental health and the importance of seeking help when needed were held, along with sessions on returning to traditional foods, complete with a canning demonstration.

Northern Gateway Hearings Tangled In Web Of Aboriginal Rights, Title

[Huffington Post](#)

March 17, 2013

Dene Moore and Will Campbell



A top Northern Gateway Pipelines official says the company is trying to balance the many competing interests in the project, and realizes it may be impossible to satisfy them all. (CP)

A top Northern Gateway Pipelines official says the company is trying to balance the many competing interests in the project, and realizes it may be impossible to satisfy them all.

Federal review hearings into the \$6-billion pipeline project continue Monday in Prince Rupert, where the three-person panel has been hearing about the company's aboriginal engagement and public consultation.

"I think it is important to understand this is a very diverse project. It's a very complex project. There's a lot of interests at stake," Janet Holder, leader of the Northern Gateway project team for Enbridge (TSX:ENB), told the panel last week.

The company has gone well beyond what it believes is required, she said, but the 1,200-kilometre pipeline is "a very challenging project to try to incorporate everybody's interests.

"There are some interests that are impossible for us to incorporate, and we get that," Holder said under questioning by Rosanne Kyle, lawyer for the Gixsala Nation.

Getting First Nations on board has proven to be a difficult task for the Calgary-based pipeline company, exacerbated by Ottawa's decision to designate the environmental and regulatory review as the primary means of Crown consultation.

"The federal government would not support a process for aboriginal consultation separate from the (joint review panel) process...", said an internal Aboriginal Consultation Plan obtained by The Canadian Press using an Access to Information request.

John Carruthers, president of Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, said about 60 per cent of aboriginal groups affected have signed equity agreements. He said efforts to engage aboriginal groups are ongoing and will continue after the panel issues its report.

"It would be 100 per cent. I'm not saying that that's probable," Carruthers said.

"They have issues we need to address, so we want that dialogue, but we see there is tremendous potential for the project to add positive benefits to communities. We think it's important to build long-term relationship with communities."

At least one First Nation has already filed a constitutional challenge with the review panel, and the federal and provincial governments, questioning the legality of a panel decision that it claims infringes on aboriginal rights.

"We're treated as a stakeholder in this process," said Carrie Henchitt, lawyer for the Heiltsuk Nation. "We are not just stakeholders. We have specific rights very different from other interest groups."

The hearings on aboriginal consultation are proceeding without the participation of Coastal First Nations, which withdrew from the process last month saying the group was out of money and faith in the process.

Federal officials were warned two years ago that underfunding for aboriginal groups could undermine the consultation plan.

A November 2010 Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency memo, obtained using Access to Information, noted that courts have not ordered government to fund aboriginal participation, "however, underfunding consultation could still have adverse legal consequences for the Crown."

More than \$17 million was requested by aboriginal groups in B.C. and Alberta. Approximately \$5 million has been allocated. Northern Gateway also provided funds to about 45 aboriginal groups for studies and participation.

Additional money was allocated but Art Sterritt, executive director of Coastal First Nations, said it wasn't enough.

"That will never hold up in a court," Sterritt said. "There are many First Nations that weren't able to afford to be there to start with. They've never even been in this room."

The tangled web of aboriginal rights and title in B.C., where most First Nations do not have treaties with the Crown, has further complicated the already controversial pipeline proposal.

First Nations lawyers have pressed the company's expert panel for detailed answers about title and rights.

"We do explain very clearly in our application what we refer to as rights. Title is not something that we have ever taken a position on at any point in time," Holder said during questioning.

"That is something between First Nations and the Crown... We've taken a practical position with regards to rights and title and the title aspect needs to be left between yourself and the Crown."

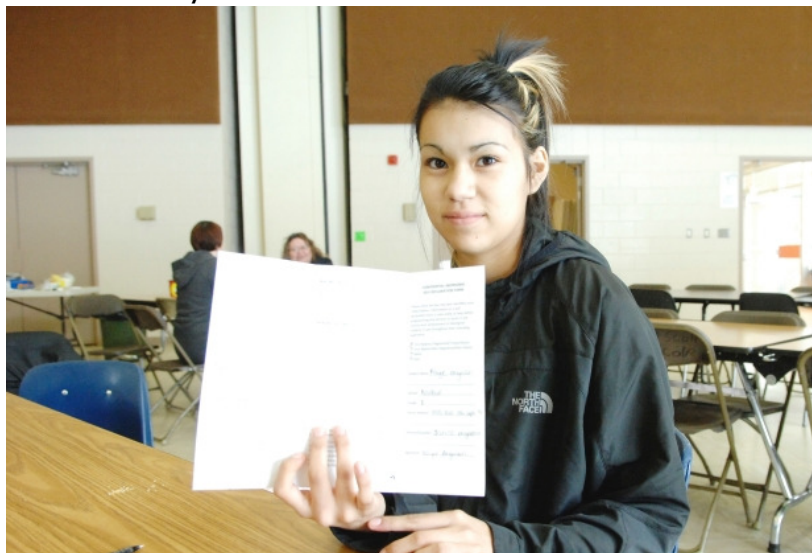
The panel has until the end of the year to issues its report and recommendations.

Program to encourage aboriginal student self-declaration

[Regina Leader-Post](#)

March 18, 2013

Emma Graney



High school student Rayne Longman shows her completed First Nation and Metis self-declaration form at Scott Collegiate in Regina, Sask. on Sunday March 17, 2013. Photograph by: Don Healy, Regina Leader-Post

Driving up the numbers of self-declared aboriginal students in schools is just one piece of the puzzle, as far as Sarah Longman is concerned.

The Regina Public Schools' aboriginal transitions consultant was at the Albert Scott Community Centre on Sunday leading an information session about the benefits of self-declaration, such as specialized programs, resources and, most of all, more accurate data when it comes to the number of First Nations and Metis students in Queen City schools.

Longman says that will in turn lead to more factual results when it comes to issues such as graduation rates and academic achievement.

"At some of our schools, just by looking at them we know that they have a population that's about 90 per cent aboriginal, and yet when we look at the data for that school, it says only 30 per cent of the kids are aboriginal," she told the Leader-Post.

"The goal is to accumulate that baseline data, so we know where performance levels really are, and then we can provide more programs and more services where they're needed."

An example of that is the division's Elders in Residence program, whereby 24 public schools have a dedicated aboriginal elder.

Then there are the new Aboriginal Student Advocates, who work one-on-one with aboriginal high school students.

Their role is three-pronged - working as an academic tutor where needed, connecting with families in their homes, and keeping track of student absences.

"Some of the students who haven't self-declared could really benefit from a program like that," Longman explained.

"But there's no way to know who they are, and they may not even know these resources are there."

An example of that is Rayne Longman, who is in Grade 11 at Balfour Collegiate.

She was at the community centre on Sunday, filling out a self-declaration form.

Admitting she didn't know a lot about programs on offer, she said declaring her cultural identity "might help" as she works her way through high school.

It may even lead to more opportunities at a university level, which Rayne said she'd like to pursue someday, perhaps in social work.

A second Aboriginal Student Advocate was recently hired by the division, but Longman admits she would like to see the program expanded even more - and that's where accurate data comes in, because to know exact numbers of First Nations and Metis students in schools means more targeted funding.

Longman is also a huge proponent of forming more relationships with local school community members.

"Research says to us that that home-school relationship really is paramount to the success of our students," she said.

"It's really important for us to build that strong working relationship with families." But it's not easy.

For a whole host of reasons, it can be tough convincing families about the value of self-declaration.

"I think what's always been missing there is providing that information about why we do this, what the importance of it is, who will have access to the information," she said.

She said getting the school division's elders advisory committee on board with the program has played a significant part in promoting the benefits of families self-declaring their aboriginal ancestry.

But creating more accurate data specific to aboriginal enrolment numbers will by no means be a short process.

"I know this is going to take a while and ... I see this taking a couple of years before the data is accurate," she said.

"This is huge. But knowing there is a need and working toward filling that need, that's the first step."

Jails shouldn't be 'racial ghettos'

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

to



Dale Cummings/Winnipeg Free Press

The country's corrections investigator, Howard Sapers, has found Correctional Service Canada is not fulfilling its statutory duty to keep aboriginal offenders from bouncing back into the system. Too few programs are aimed specifically rehabilitate native offenders, and the rate at which they are filling Canada's jails is rising.

Manitoba's Stony Mountain, in effect, is an aboriginal prison with a native population exceeding 60 per cent. The populations in provincial Prairie

jails are higher, Mr. Sapers noted in his report, *Spirit Matters*. This is as a result of a failure on many levels, but the correctional service has not done enough to divert native prisoners into programs that are better at turning them into productive citizens who stay out of the courts.

For example, there are only four First Nations healing lodges, three in Western Canada. The lodges get less funding than healing facilities operated by CSC, their workers are paid far less and are in constant turnover.

Mr. Sapers found part of the problem is that CSC, itself, decided to unnecessarily restrict who can be transferred to the lodges. Although the Corrections and Conditional Release Act does restrict the lodges to minimum-security prisoners, CSC policy does. This constrains lodge development because 80 per cent of aboriginal inmates are ranked at higher risk.

The reported noted that many of the factors leading so many aboriginal people into jail are beyond the reach of corrections: Aboriginal people are more likely to be involved in crime due to the lingering impact of colonial policies and due to high unemployment, substance abuse and mental-health issues, they have criminal records that trigger higher risk ratings.

But Mr. Sapers pulled no punches in noting CSC has not done its part -- money that was supposed to be spent on healing lodges was diverted to other use in the correctional system. The long-standing financial neglect of the few lodges operating means slow progress on strong rehabilitation, even as the number of aboriginal inmates rises steadily.

CSC needs to undergo a sea change in attitude, something Mr. Sapers say can be carried out only by the appointment of a deputy commissioner at CSC to introduce policies and programs designed to meet the needs of aboriginal inmates. The data imply that not too far in the future, Canada's jails will look like racial ghettos. The Harper government should see the wisdom of the necessary cultural change Mr. Sapers describes.

Mississippi Nehthowak and Huidbay head to court

[Net Newsledger](#)

March 18, 2013



Idle No More Fort William First Nation Dec 30 2012. Photo By: Nathan Ogden

WINNIPEG – Mining - Mississippi Nehthowak and Huidbay head to court. “We are sovereign and asserting our laws and jurisdiction over our uncaded ancestral traditional territory,” states Chief Dumas of the Mississippi Nehethowak. “We have never gave up our lands, waters and natural resources. We have a responsibility to manage their use and protection. MCCN expected the province of Manitoba to uphold the rule of law and assist in enforcing the orders.”

The Chiefs of Manitoba state, in a media statement, “Huidbay never contacted Chief Dumas to address his concerns, nor did the province fulfill its legal obligations to enforce the Stop Work Orders. Instead, both Huidbay and the province of Manitoba issued very similar letters to Chief Dumas telling him that Manitoba fully supports Huidbay’s activities on MCCN territory”.

The sovereign Nation of Mississippi Nehethowak as represented by Mathias Colomb Cree Nation (MCCN) has extensive Ancestral and Traditional Territory. [Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Ltd \(Huidbay\)](#) has proposed Lalor Lake mine project which is on uncaded Mississippi Nehethowak Territory and has failed to obtain MCCN consent to operate on their territory and extract their resources.

Chief Dumas attended with his community members and Idle No More supporters to the Lalor site on January 28 and March 5, 2013 and served two Stop Work Orders to the Huidbay and the Province of Manitoba. Both site visits were peaceful gatherings where community members engaged in drumming, singing and cooking traditional foods. The RCMP attended at MCCN’s request to help enforce Cree law.

Chief Arlen Dumas said, "We are sovereign and asserting our laws and jurisdiction over our unceded ancestral traditional territory. We have never gave up our lands, waters and natural resources. We have a responsibility to manage their use and protection. MCCN expected the province of Manitoba to uphold the rule of law and assist in enforcing the orders."

Idle No More is a grassroots Indigenous movement which has been growing in intensity over the last few months. The movement, which focuses on advancing Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights, has engaged in educational teach-ins, round dances, marches, rallies and protests.

Idle No More's core messages have related to opposing federal legislation violating Aboriginal and treaty rights; addressing the urgent crisis of poverty in First Nations and implementing the treaties so that both treaty partners prosper. Protecting the lands and waters in Canada for our future generations has been a central theme throughout.

Pamela Palmater is a Mi'kmaw lawyer and professor from Eel River Bar First Nation in northern New Brunswick. She is also the Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University and works with First Nations all over Canada on treaty and governance matters. She has won multiple awards for her social justice advocacy for raising awareness on First Nation rights and history. She was one of the spokespersons for Idle No More early on and has been an organizer ever since.

Palmater was invited by Chief Dumas of Mathias Colomb Cree Nation (MCCN) and his community to help them organize their cultural activities at Hudbay's Lalor Lake Mine and to help co-ordinate Idle No More's involvement. Idle No More representatives from northern Manitoba were eager to join Palmater, Chief Dumas in MCCN's efforts to assert their inherent rights, engage in their traditional customs and practices, and defend their lands and waters.

Palmater said: "This movement was inspired by the need of our grassroots people to defend our sovereignty, lands and treaties. Our traditional and elected leaders are no longer in this battle alone. When Idle No More encouraged people to stand up, we committed to be in this for the long haul. The provincial governments have effectively engaged in blockades against First Nations economies for years. They have prevented First Nations from accessing their own lands and resources, and Idle No More is here to support MCCN in defending its sovereignty and its right to protect its resources."

Hudbay's lawsuit against Palmater is an act of intimidation to silence her advocacy work with First Nations. Hudbay's threat of jail time would devastate her family. "The Indigenous Guatemalans report that when they refused to be evicted by Hudbay, their leader was killed and their women raped. In Canada, Hudbay is using a lawsuit and threat of jail to force an eviction of Indigenous peoples. We have to

support leaders like Chief Dumas who are willing to put their freedom on the line to defend his land for future generations” Palmater added.

Esgenoôpetitj First Nation in 'lose-lose' over federal funding: Annual agreement undermines social programs, such as housing, says band councillor

[CBC News](#)

Mar 19, 2013 11:17 AM AT

Members of the Esgenoôpetitj First Nation say they're being forced into signing what they believe is an inadequate funding agreement with the federal government.

Coun. Curtis Bartibogue says this year's annual agreement provides less funds for social programs, such as housing, and will leave his community in a state of catastrophe.

"They're doing all this without any consultation towards First Nations — and they're doing it regardless of what our stand is," said Bartibogue, noting his community is already one of the poorest in the country.



Curtis Bartibogue says Esgenoôpetitj First Nation will lose all federal funding on April 1 if the band doesn't sign the annual agreement. (CBC)

But if band members don't sign the agreement, they'll lose all federal funding on April 1 and day-to-day operations would come to a halt, he said.

"Definitely a lose-lose situation for our leadership here in Esgenoôpetitj, basically we have a gun to our heads," said Bartibogue.

Changes 'solely administrative'

In an emailed statement, Aboriginal Affairs said changes to the agreement are "solely administrative," and would have no impact on recipients.

The deadline to sign the agreement passed last week. On Friday, council members met with representatives of Aboriginal Affairs to iron out conflicts over treaties.

The council will meet again on Tuesday to reconsider whether or not to sign the funding agreement, said Bartibogue.

Native peace activist John Boncore found dead: Chase resident John Boncore tried to arrest George Bush, and led the 1972 Attica Prison riot



[Vancouver Sun](#)

March 19, 2013 8:38 AM

Mike Youds

Political activist John Boncore, whose native name was Splitting the Sky, was found dead near his home in Chase, near Salmon Arm last week.

His native name was Dacajeweiah, or Splitting the Sky, and it was a name that John Boncore took to

heart through his lifetime of political activism.

Boncore, 61, was found dead last week on a path on the Adams Lake Indian Reserve near his home in Chase, near Salmon Arm. He is believed to have fallen on cement steps and may have suffered a blow to the head.

Also known as John Hill, or Dac, Boncore will be remembered as a man who stood up for all that he saw as tyranny and injustice. He principally shouted from the ramparts for native peoples, and made headlines four years ago as the man who was charged after trying to make a citizen's arrest of U.S. President George W. Bush on a visit to Calgary.

More recently, Boncore galvanized native resistance to the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline in northern B.C. to the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline.

"Believe it or not, a lot of people in Alberta are very concerned about the pipeline," said Larry McKillop, a Calgary friend. "John was a bit of a hero to us."

According to a biography written a decade ago by John Steinbach, Boncore's early life sowed the seeds of his activist spirit. He was born in New York City of Mohawk/Cree and Italian-American parents. His father, a painter, and 11 other co-workers died in 1958 after they were sent into a storage tank at U.S. Rubber without respirators. The family was left destitute. Boncore and his five siblings were forcibly removed from their mother and sent into foster care.

Boncore found foster care degrading and oppressive, and was soon branded as incorrigible. He wound up living in the street, robbed a store in desperation and was sentenced to four years in prison on his first conviction.

At age 19 he landed in Attica Prison, notorious for brutality and overcrowding. There he became the leader of the bloodiest prison revolt in U.S. history in 1971 — 43 people were killed, with 29 inmates and 10 hostages shot during the retaking of the prison by authorities. Boncore was sentenced to another 20 years and narrowly escaped execution over the death of a prison guard, and survived several assassination attempts on the inside before being pardoned in 1979.

He continued his activism in the U.S., and was active in the anti-nuclear and American Indian movements in the 1980s and '90s. In 1993, Bonocore was invited to a conference in Edmonton to speak about native American sovereignty. It was there that he met Cree woman Sandra Bruderer, whom he married.

Bonocore told his story in *The Autobiography of Splitting the Sky: From Attica to Gustafsen Lake*, which he wrote with Bruderer a few years ago.

Bonocore was also an actor in recent years, with roles in the TV series *Men In Trees* and *Da Vinci's City Hall*, and in films *The Last Rites of Ransom Pride* and *Deepwater*, shot in Clearwater in 2005.

Bonocore is survived by Bruderer, six children, and five grandchildren.

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Idle No More, Defenders of the Land form alliance, call for "Sovereignty Summer"

[APTN National News](#)

Jorge Barrera



Idle No More has joined forces with Defenders of the Land and the new alliance plans to launch "escalating action" during what is being called the "Sovereignty Summer," according to a draft joint declaration obtained by APTN National News.

The alliance has been endorsed by Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelah McLean and Nina Wilson, the four founders of Idle No More, along with the movement's lead organizers, provincial and territorial chapters.

As a result of the alliance, Idle No More has now agreed to support non-violent direct action, including blockades, in the cause of Indigenous rights.

The Defenders of the Land is an established network of Indigenous activists that was formally formed in 2008. The network has been involved in Indigenous land rights issues across the country, including in ongoing hotspots like Ontario's Grassy Narrows First Nation, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation and Barriere Lake in Quebec.

The joint declaration is calling for a "Sovereignty Summer" that would see "co-ordinated non-violent direct actions." The statement also calls on "non-Indigenous peoples" to join Indigenous communities in the actions.

"Alternatives will only come to life if we escalate our actions, taking bold non-violent direct action that challenges the illegitimate power of corporations who dictate government police," says the draft declaration.

The declaration also calls for a "Solidarity Spring" to precede the Sovereignty Summer with calls to action on March 21, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and April 22, Earth Day.

"The Harper government's agenda is clear: to weaken all collective rights and environmental protections, in order to turn Canada into an extraction state that gives corporations unchecked power to destroy our communities and environment for profit," says the statement. "Idle No More and Defenders of the Land....have joined together to issue this common call for escalating action."

The declaration makes several demands, including a repeal of sections of the now passed Bill C-45 that impact the environment along with Aboriginal and Treaty rights; changing the electoral system to proportional representation; ensuring consultation happens before any legislation is introduced that impacts collective rights and the environment; the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; an end to the government's policies of "extinguishment;" full implementation of the treaties and a national inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women.

"We know it will take a lot more to defeat (Prime Minister Stephen Harper) and the corporate agenda. But against the power of their money and weapons, we have the power of our bodies and spirits," says the declaration. "There is nothing that can match the power of peaceful, collective action in defense of the people and Mother Earth."

New technology maps Inuit knowledge: "A profound tool for reversing discrimination"

[Nunatsiaq Online](#)

March 20, 2013

Lisa Gregoire



Carleton University geographer Dr. Fraser Taylor just got a \$516,323 grant to continue his work helping Inuit map their communities, their way. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)

OTTAWA — About 25 kilometres southeast of Arctic Bay, on the northern shore of Adams Sound, there is a place called Qajuutinnguaq. It means “Hill shaped like a chisel.”

You wouldn’t find it on most official maps because official maps of Nunavut contain huge swaths of unnamed land. And most of the place names that do exist were given by colonial explorers to honour foreign kings and dignitaries.

But a geographer from Carleton University in Ottawa is trying to decolonize those maps by helping Inuit officially name the places around their community with traditional, Inuktitut names using free software that he invented.

And the work of Dr. Fraser Taylor just got a big boost. With a \$516,323 grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and an expected matching grant from the Ontario government, Taylor hopes to improve computer hardware and software so that more northern communities can map their world, their way.

“Our multi-media cybercartographic techniques fit so well with the oral culture,” Taylor said, during a recent interview at his Carleton office. “Print is totally inadequate to capture the storytelling traditions.”

Taylor, an award-winning and world-renowned geographer at Carleton Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre, coined the term “cybercartography” in 1997 to describe a new form of multimedia, interactive atlas.

Basically he created a powerful online tool called Nunaliit (<http://nunaliit.org/>) that allows anyone to map just about anything in a very unique way—using not just maps and text but audio, video, photographs, graphs and any other form of information that helps viewers understand the place.

For instance, on the [Arctic Bay Atlas](#), you can click on Qajuutinnguaq and find not only photographs of the place and an Inuktitut audio clip, but a memory of the place uploaded by a user.

“When I was in grade 5, my classmates and I were spending the weekend there,” one person wrote. “We went climbing, walked around the area, played baseball and soccer, stayed up late at night.”

The new money will pay for much needed hardware replacement and also upgrades to Nunaliit which has been used to map many things, from the risk of urban homelessness in southern Canadian cities to snowmobile trails.

For his northern work, Taylor teamed up with Claudio Aporta, an associate professor in Carleton's Department of Sociology and Anthropology who specializes in northern indigenous knowledge. With Aporta's connections, and a host of northern partners including Nunavut Arctic College, they helped Inuit create several online atlases that allow users to experience Nunavut from the inside out.

Taylor says it's crucial to record that perspective now: language and local knowledge — of the land, the ocean, the weather, the animals and more—are disappearing due to rapid social, climactic and economic changes.

"We use local and traditional knowledge as a dynamic concept. It's changing all the time. And Inuit know it's changing and they're very keen observers of their own environment. So we're trying to capture the perspectives of change and all aspects of change from the viewpoint of those most affected by it," Taylor says.

"In an oral tradition, knowledge dies with the holder of the knowledge. We need to escape from our silos of specialization into more holistic views of realities not just in northern communities but in all communities and all science."

It's Nunaliit's flexibility that makes it so special. It can handle multiple forms of data including video, audio, office documents, mapping documents and more.

The Inuit [Siku \[Sea Ice\] Atlas](#) for example, contains layers and layers of information about the ice around Baffin Island including translated interviews with hunters on the importance of sea ice for hunting and travelling and their observations on how the ice is changing, and why.

Sea ice data is not only critical for Inuit: local observations are valuable to researchers around the globe who study the earth's changing ice, Taylor said.

Cindy Cowan, director of community and distance learning programs for Nunavut Arctic College, met Taylor through the Arctic Bay Atlas project. The college now uses Taylor's cyber atlases to teach student and adult learners how to participate in external research or conduct their own research using Taylor's software to bring the data together.

The atlases also help to make science less intimidating for adult learners, she adds, many of whom live in small communities, speak Inuktitut as a first language and didn't graduate from high school. Inuit soon discover they can pursue topics they find relevant and useful.

"Many Inuit have been silenced, quite literally, from the early years of residential schools where they were not allowed to speak their language," said Cowan.

"So their voice has been silenced and their knowledge has been suppressed because of how it's communicated is orally and in their traditional language. There's been a lot of misinformation because people truly don't understand the culture. Maybe the researchers were well intentioned, I'm sure they were, but they were telling the world about Inuit without truly understanding them."

These atlas projects, then, produce a power shift because they allow Inuit to switch roles from specimen to scientist.

"To my mind it's a profound tool for reversing discrimination. Whose knowledge is privileged? Whose world view is privileged?" Cowan said. "There's been colonizing relations between Canada and Inuit, between researchers from the South and those who have been researched, and I think we need to de-colonize that process."

As an added bonus, the atlases appeal to youth who yearn for a connection to their elders and the past but who live in a digital world, Cowan adds. In building atlases of their communities, they can build bridges between those worlds.

First Nations say they will fight oilsands, pipeline: Canadian and U.S. aboriginal leaders in Ottawa promise legal challenge, other measures

[CBC](#)

Mar 20, 2013 9:24 AM ET



Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam speaks during a news conference Wednesday March 20, 2013 in Ottawa. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

An alliance of First Nations leaders is preparing to fight proposed new pipelines both in the courts and through unspecified direct action.

Native leaders from both Canada and the United States were on Parliament Hill on Wednesday to underline their opposition to both the Northern Gateway and Keystone XL pipelines.

The first would tie the Alberta oilsands to the West Coast, while the second would send bitumen to refineries on the American Gulf Coast.

'We have to wake up to the crazy decisions that this government's making to change the world in a negative way.'—Chief Reuben George, Tsleil-Waututh First Nation

Some of the chiefs brushed off the federal government's appointment this week of a special envoy to look at tensions between natives and the energy industry.

Vancouver-based lawyer Doug Eyford is to focus on energy infrastructure in Western Canada, but some native leaders say he has no credibility.

He is to examine First Nations concerns about the troubled Northern Gateway proposal, as well as the development of liquid natural gas plants, marine terminals and other energy infrastructure in British Columbia and Alberta.

He will discuss environmental protection, jobs and economic development, and First Nations rights to a share of the wealth from natural resources.

Some native chiefs, however, said Eyford has already failed. Although he is also the federal government's chief negotiator on comprehensive land claims, they said he hasn't accomplished much on that file.

Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation said natives are determined to block the pipelines.

"It's going to be a long, hot summer," he said at a news conference.

"We have a lot of issues at stake."

'We're going to stop these pipelines'

Phil Lane Jr. of the American Yankton Sioux, said native groups south of the border will stand with their Canadian cousins.

"We're going to stop these pipelines on way or another," he said.

Chief Martin Louie of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation in northern B.C., said the pipeline opponents will never back down.

"If we have to keep going to court, we'll keep doing that," he said.

He said the stakes are high and go beyond native issues.

"We're the ones that's going to save whatever we have left of this Earth," he said.

Chief Reuben George of the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation on Vancouver Island said it's time to act against the federal government's resource development agenda.

"We, as a nation, have to wake up," he said. "We have to wake up to the crazy decisions that this government's making to change the world in a negative way."

In Canada, Negative Views of Aboriginals Increasing, Survey Finds: Nationwide talks aim to find solutions to racism

[Epoch Times](#)

March 20, 2013

Justina Reichel



Two members of the Siksika Nation from southern Alberta and a non-aboriginal supporter protest in Ottawa as part of the Idle No More movement. Negative perceptions about aboriginals have increased, sparking a need for national dialogue, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation says. (Michelle Caron/Wikipedia)

Negative perceptions about aboriginals have increased among Canadians since last year, sparking a need for national dialogue on the issue, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation says.

A recent telephone survey sponsored by the CRRF, a federal agency, found that just 59 percent of English Canadians have a positive perception of aboriginals, down from 68 percent last year.

Although immigrants tend to have more positive attitudes than the general population, 25 percent of both the immigrant and non-immigrant respondents reported having low trust of aboriginals.

"The survey results tell us we all need to make greater efforts to identify how negative perceptions develop and what can be done to address them," says Rubin Friedman, the CRRF's principal operating officer.

"Over the years, we have had anecdotal reports of how quickly some immigrants picked up negative stereotypes of Aboriginal Peoples in cities where they live in close proximity to each other," he says.

"Immigrants in particular often have no knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples and their history in Canada. Why do negative perceptions develop so fast?"

Aboriginals are the fastest-growing population in Canada, and with recent high-profile issues in the spotlight such as the Idle No More protest movement, the relationship between aboriginals and other Canadians has become one of the most important race relations issues in the country, says Friedman.

As more and more Aboriginal Peoples move into cities and towns there is potential for great misunderstanding.

— Rubin Friedman, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

"In Canada we have developed this concept that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies in the same way to everybody, but if we understand our history better we would know that there are elements of our foundation which give Aboriginal Peoples a particular status that doesn't apply to the rest of us, so that they have particular rights that other people don't have," he explains.

"If you're completely focused on the notion of equality in every way, this can be something that's hard to get your head around. And I could see that as more and more Aboriginal Peoples move into cities and towns there is potential for great misunderstanding—they're sharing the same space with people of many backgrounds."

'A more positive kind of contact'

The good news, says Friedman, is that in general the survey found the more Canadians reported having contact with aboriginals, the more positive their views were. The only anomalies were Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where Canadians reported both the most negative attitudes and the greatest frequency of contact.

"Unlike other parts of the country, increased contact here did not have an effect on more positive views. This might suggest that the kind of contact with aboriginals is important for more positive attitudes, not just frequency," says Friedman.

"We need a more positive kind of contact that a dialogue can bring."

On Wednesday the CRRF held an event in Winnipeg to discuss perceptions of aboriginals in immigrant communities, and further explore the nature of the issues to see what should be done both locally and elsewhere in the country.

The talks, launched the day before the International Day for the Elimination of Racism on March 21, will continue as part of the CRRF's Interfaith and Belonging Project—a national initiative funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to promote dialogue between different ethnocultural and faith-based communities.

The talks aim to strengthen these communities' participatory role in Canadian society.

The question of how aboriginals are perceived among newcomers from a range of faiths will be explored in the dialogue, by bringing together local and national leaders.

Friedman says the talks will do much to uncover solutions to address the negative perceptions of aboriginals in Canada. There are numerous solutions that could be

introduced such as changes to the curriculum on these subjects in the education system, or providing more cultural and historical information about Aboriginal Peoples to new immigrants, he adds.

"Given the complexity of the issue itself, how deeply ingrained some of the attitudes might already be, the solutions [will] probably have to be multifaceted," he says.

"[There is a] need for greater community dialogue, dialling down the rhetoric—if possible trying to find venues and opportunities for bringing people together in a less confrontational way."

Questions about funds' whereabouts raised at Black Lake First Nation

[NewsTalk 980 CJME](#)

Mar 20, 2013 10:35am

Nigel Maxwell

A band councillor at Black Lake First Nation is stepping down over what he calls corruption issues on the reserve.

Alphonse Disain Jr. said he is frustrated by the lack of communication over why the band is \$6 million in debt.

"We did just talk with one of our consultants and we asked him, 'Where did this money go?' He told us, 'We don't know. There are no records anywhere,'" said Disain.

The current chief and band manager could not be reached for comment, since both are on vacation in Arizona. Disain said that makes him feel even more frustrated. Each year the band receives hundreds of thousands of dollars from the federal government to assist with the operations of the reserve.

"I wanna know where the heck that money is going, not from this leadership but from the past leadership," he said.

Former Chief Donald Sayazie said there have been a number of big projects over the past 10 years, including a new band hall, a new band store, and a hockey arena.

The costs of the band store and the band hall were alone nearly \$3.5 million.

"It's like when you buy a house or a new car. You know that you are going to go into debt but these things will make your life better," said Sayazie.

He said that the band also faces other costs that are not paid for by the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, such as the cost to pay for a funeral.

"One year we paid out over \$300,000 dollars for funerals," he said.

A spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development said they are working with the band on debt repayment, also known as a recovery plan.

The Black Lake First Nation has a number of other big projects on the go that will help it get back on positive footing. There is an agreement with Pronto Airways, as well as a proposal for a \$300-million hydro project.

Media can do better when covering aboriginal issues, journalist argues during U of R lecture

[Regina Leader-Post](#)

March 20, 2013

Vanessa Brown



Journalist, Wab Kinew delivers the 33rd annual James Minifie lecture at the U of Regina on March 19, 2013. "Ideals Once More: How social media, social movements and Indigenous people urge us towards a new ethics of Journalism." Photograph by: Don Healy, Regina Leader-Post

For journalist Wab Kinew, the Idle No More movement provides the media a chance to re-examine how aboriginal

issues are covered.

Speaking to a crowd of about 300 people at the University of Regina on Tuesday night, Kinew noted coverage of the movement that swept the nation recently too often focused on the back and forth between First Nations Chiefs and the federal government at the expense of the thousands of people who took part at the grassroots level.

"It ignored the broader and, to me, much more important story of the fact that this is a movement driven by grassroots people, and they were speaking about the environment, they were speaking about opportunity for kids, they were speaking about space for culture," said Kinew, who is also the director of indigenous inclusion at the University of Winnipeg. "But if you watched the media coverage of Jan. 11 (the day Prime Minister Stephen Harper met with some First Nations Chiefs), you didn't hear much about the environment or kids or culture."

The discussion was instead dominated by which aboriginal leaders did not attend the meeting in Ottawa, as well as divisions within the Assembly of First Nations, Kinew lamented.

Arielle Zerr, a third-year journalism student at the U of R, followed coverage both in the newspapers and through social media. She also noticed perhaps too much coverage of the day-to-day politics rather than a continued focus on the organic nature of the movement.

Zerr said she will take that lesson with her when she begins her journalism career.

"I think you have to remember to always talk to the affected people, to not just get the opinion of a government official," she said in an interview. "You have to make sure to talk to the people that are part of a movement and the people being impacted by it."

Media outlets may have dug deeper into the issues later on in the newscast or in a separate newspaper story, Kinew said, but he would have liked to see the grassroots angle as part of the main stories that dominated headlines for months.

Social media has also changed the way people consume news, Kinew added. Rather than watch a full TV newscast for broader coverage, many read articles through a link on Twitter or Facebook.

"I think that kind of suggests we're in an era where we have to rethink how we provide balance," Kinew said. "Maybe we should be thinking about providing balance within each story and not just over all of our coverage."

He felt coverage was not properly balanced from the start in December, and wrote the celebrated online piece *Idle No More Is Not Just an "Indian Thing"*.

"I saw that what I took to be the aims of the movement were not really being conveyed through the media, were not being properly understood by the average

Canadian or the mainstream Canadian. To me, Idle No More is about the environment, it's about doing right by kids, it's about allowing space for Indigenous people to practise their culture."

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Feds in Saskatchewan to back first on-reserve potash mine

[Metro Saskatoon](#)

March 19, 2013

Morgan Modjeski



Metro/ Morgan Modjeski Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Bernard Valcourt was in Saskatoon to announce the development of a potash mine on the Muskowekwan First Nation.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Bernard Valcourt was in Saskatoon Tuesday morning to announce the development of the first potash mine on a First Nations reserve.

Known as the Muskowekwan First Nation potash mine, the project was accepted by the federal government under the First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act. Now, the feds can incorporate a provincial regulatory regime to

govern commercial and industrial activities in the area. A system needed to attract investors.

Valcourt explained this type of project could soon be something seen across the country.

“What is important here is to show that a piece of federal legislation comes in handy to help create jobs, wealth and long term prosperity for First Nation members in Muskowekwan, but also other communities in the surrounding area,” said Valcourt.

He continued, “What we’re seeing here today is a first, the first potash mine on First Nations land in the country and I hope this is just the beginning of a trend we’ll see right across Canada. ”

The mine, being developed by Encanto Potash Corp., is expected to produce up to 2.8 million tonnes of potash annually for a life span of more than 50 years. The project is also expected to create 1,000 construction jobs during the development of the mine and 500 jobs once it’s fully operational.

Chief of the Muskowekwan First Nations, Reginald Bellerose said although he’s excited about the project, he said he wants to ensure resources are developed properly by industrial players.

“My main focus is to bring the comfort level to certainty for the Muskowekwan citizens,” said Bellerose. “(So they can) rest easy at night and be assured that environmentally, health and safety wise and transportation wise that we will have legislation, regulation and monitoring in place to function in each of those areas so that when they come onto the reserve, that it’s not a free-for-all.”

The price tag on the project is pegged at roughly \$3 billion and is expected to result in tens of millions in revenue royalties for the First Nations community on an annual basis.

Idle No More not dead: organizer

[Sudbury Northern Life](#)

Mar 21, 2013- 11:01 AM

Heidi Ulrichsen



About 40 people gathered in the downtown March 20 for an Idle No More march — the first since the end of January. Photo by Heidi Ulrichsen.

There may have been fewer Idle No More protests lately, but that doesn't mean the

movement is dead, according to one of the local organizers.

About 40 people gathered in the downtown March 20 for an Idle No More march — the first since the end of January.

Protesters marched through the downtown, blocking rush-hour traffic, and held round dances on both Durham and Paris streets.

Bruce McComber said Idle No More is really just a “branding” of Aboriginals' years-long struggles against the status quo, something which definitely isn't going away any time soon.

“It was a part of ongoing struggles against our environmental rights, human injustices,” he said.

“It became branded and trendy and cool for some people. But the injustices that are going on in the world aren't going anywhere, that's for sure.”

Earlier this winter, the grassroots Aboriginal movement grabbed national headlines, with protests sweeping the country. Earlier protests in Greater Sudbury attracted hundreds of people, a far cry from the most recent event.

What Idle No More is all about differs depending on who you ask, but one of the rallying points is opposition to Bill C-45, a 440-page omnibus bill passed by the federal government in early December.

Protesters say regulatory changes contained in the bill trample on Aboriginal rights.

Attiwapiskat Chief Teresa Spence, who staged a six-week hunger strike to draw attention to First Nations issues, was another rallying point.

While Idle No More definitely isn't over, McComber admits things have been quieter lately. He said the movement's organizers are going back to the drawing board to figure out where the movement should go next.

“Within the Canadian and American nation states, a peaceful protest can only go on for so long,” he said. “People have jobs and other commitments. You certainly can't fundraise and go to Ottawa every single week, especially when nothing is changing.”

As for the March 20 protest, McComber said it's necessary to create friction to grab headlines, and if that means blocking traffic, then so be it.

The protest was just one of many which will be held across the country over the next few days, he said.

Sudbury Coalition Against Poverty member and Laurentian University sociology professor Gary Kinsman was one of those who attended the protest.

He said Idle No More has been one of the “most inspiring” movements in recent history, especially in the context of opposition to the federal government.

“Especially for younger indigenous people, I think it's meant a lot,” Kinsman said.

“I think that whole slogan of Idle No More has really resonated with a lot of them. So for a lot of them, it's really been a movement out of passivity, and to levels of activity. I really hope that can continue.”

As for the apparent lull in Idle No More activity, Kinsman said the movement is having to regroup after one of its rallying points — Spence — ended her hunger strike and returned to her community.

He said the Assembly of First Nations also seems to be set on “calming things down and demobilizing people.”

Kinsman said he thinks there's a “certain period of reflection” and “rebuilding” happening with Idle No More right now.

“I'm hoping what you're going to see is more of a bottom-up, community-based movement emerging under the banner of Idle No More.”

Mary Golda Ross: The first Native American female engineer



[Amsterdam News](#)

March 21, 2013 1:54 pm

Jasmin K. Williams

Photo courtesy of Mary McCarthy

Mary G. Ross was a rocket scientist long before man even walked on the moon. Born on Aug. 9, 1908, in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains, she was just a year younger than the state of Oklahoma, where her Cherokee ancestors had been forced to relocate some 70 years earlier on the infamous Trail of Tears. Her grandfather, John Ross, was the principal chief of the Cherokee nation between 1828 and 1866, and she took great pride in her heritage, which stressed a tradition of equal education for both boys and girls. Ross

gravitated toward math and science and oftentimes found herself the only girl in the class.

"Math was more fun than anything else. It was always a game to me," she explained in Laurel M. Sheppard's profile "Aerospace Pioneer Returns to her Native American Roots." "I was the only female in my class. I sat on one side of the room and the guys on the other side of the room. I guess they didn't want to associate with me. But I could hold my own with them and sometimes did better."

Ross graduated from high school at 16 and later attended Northeastern State Teacher's College, graduating in 1928. For the next nine years, she taught math and science in public schools.

By 1937, Ross had started asking herself, "Are you going to go out and see anything of the world, or are you going to stay in northern Oklahoma?" She went on to work as a statistical clerk for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Washington, D.C. Her talents were quickly recognized and she was sent out into the field. She went on to serve as an advisor at a Native American school in Santa Fe, N.M., which later became the Institute of American Indian Art. She returned to school herself and earned a master's degree in mathematics from the Colorado State Teachers College in 1938. While there, however, she developed a keen interest in astronomy, reading every book on the subject she could get her hands on.

With World War II came a keen interest in aviation. In 1942, while visiting friends in California, Ross heard about the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Burbank, which needed people with technical backgrounds. Ross found a position as an assistant to a consulting mathematician. She worked on developing fighter planes, specifically the P-38 Lightning fighter plane, the first to go more than 400 miles per hour.

Through Lockheed, she furthered her education as an engineer at the University of California with courses in aeronautical and mechanical engineering. Ross was on the ground floor of what would become "the Space Race."

Lockheed formed its Missile Systems Division and Ross was selected as one of the first 40 employees. She was the only Native American and the only female engineer in the group. The top-secret think tank, known as the Lockheed Skunk Works, was the start of Lockheed Missiles & Space Co., which later became a major consultant to NASA. Her work focused on the performance of ballistic missiles and other defense systems. Most of the work from that group remains classified to this day. One of Ross' key roles was as one of the authors of the "NASA Planetary Flight Handbook Vol. III," which talks about space travel to Mars and Venus.

In a 1994 article appearing in the San Jose Mercury News, Ross' top-secret work was described as "preliminary design concepts for interplanetary space travel,

manned and unmanned earth-orbiting flights, the earliest studies of orbiting satellites for both defense and civilian purposes.”

“Often at night, there were four of us working until 11 p.m.,” Ross recalled in the article. “I was the pencil pusher, doing a lot of research. My state-of-the-art tools were a slide rule and a Frieden computer,” she said.

Ross did have her turn in the public eye. In 1958, she appeared on the TV show “What’s My Line?” Who could guess the identity of the woman in the black dress with the caption “Designs Rocket Missiles and Satellites (Lockheed Aircraft)”

Ross, who had never seen a rocket blast off, believed that women would make wonderful astronauts. “But,” she said, “I’d rather stay down here and analyze the data.” The progressive and brilliant work of this Cherokee woman would help put an American on the moon. By 1958, she was working on satellite orbits and the Agena rockets, whose development and successful launch put the United States squarely in the space race.

Ross moved through the engineering ranks at Lockheed and became the senior advanced systems staff engineer, which allowed her to contribute to the development of the Poseidon and Trident missiles.

Ross retired from Lockheed in 1973, and began another career as an advocate of education in engineering and mathematics, as well as an advocate for career opportunities in those fields for women and Native Americans.

“To function efficiently, you need math,” she said. “The world is so technical; if you plan to work in it, a math background will let you go farther and faster.”

She became a pioneering member of the Society of Women Engineers, traveling to high schools to mentor college bound seniors. She also involved herself with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society and the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, expanding the education programs in both organizations. In 1992, the Silicon Valley Engineering Council inducted Ross into its Hall of Fame.

In 2004, Ross was on hand along with 25,000 other indigenous Americans for the opening of the Smithsonian Museum’s National Museum of the American Indian. For the special occasion, she asked her niece to make her a traditional Cherokee dress, the first that the 96-year-old Ross would ever own.

The American Indian News service quoted her friend Norbert Hill’s description of the pioneering scientist: “She was a strong-willed, independent woman who was ahead of her time, and a proud woman who never forgot where she was from.”

Mary G. Ross died on April 29, 2008, a few months shy of her 100th birthday.